

The President's Daily Brief

26 February 1970

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

As election day in Guatemala approaches, there are reports that the Communists plan further terrorist acts. (Page 1)

In Egypt, the rising incidence of a parasitic disease is jeopardizing economic gains from the Aswan dam and posing serious problems for the military. (Page 2)

There has been no new ground action in the Plaine des Jarres area. (Page 4)

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GUATEMALA

An unsuccessful assassination attempt against Guatemala's chief electoral official this week is probably a prelude to more violence prior to the elections on 1 March.

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Charges by both the rightist and leftist opposition parties that the government plans to rig the elections have been a principal issue in the campaign. Rightist presidential candidate Colonel Carlos Arana has threatened to take over the government should the ruling Revolutionary Party win by what he considers fraud. If no candidate wins an absolute majority, the congress is to choose between the two candidates with the largest number of votes.

The Revolutionary Party appears to have the strength for a congressional victory and at least a plurality in the presidential contest. A major wave of terrorism, however, before the elections or on election day, could drastically alter the voting pattern. If the government does not receive a strong plurality in Guatemala City, where most of the politically aware elements live, its mandate to govern would be questionable. Indecisive elections, followed by a prolonged period of instability, would increase the possibility of military intervention.

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EGYPT

Construction of the Aswan High Dam and its irrigation systems has contributed to the rapidly rising incidence in Egypt of schistosomiasis, a debilitating parasitic disease. Schistosomiasis spreads to man through a blood fluke carried by a snail found in impounded waters or canals. The incidence of the disease near the dam has risen from about 23 percent to over 90 percent in the last few years. In a total Egyptian population of 35 million, over 22 million are believed already to be infected.

The rising incidence of schistosomiasis not only jeopardizes the economic gains from the Aswan dam but also poses a severe problem for the military. The disease infects nearly all the male agricultural population--the bulk of Egypt's manpower pool. The Egyptian Army is conducting field trials of a promising new US-developed drug.

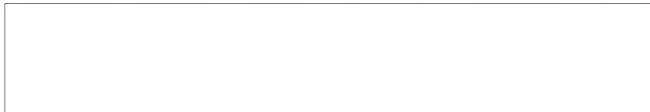
Thus far the USSR has not become involved in the search for solutions to this problem. The Egyptians are looking primarily to private US sources because of previous medical assistance given to Egypt and because of successful demonstrations of the new drug in other countries.

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PHILIPPINES

Students are planning to demonstrate again today at the US Embassy. This time they intend to protest alleged US efforts to help American servicemen evade prosecution by Philippine courts for offenses under local law. Anti-American feeling has been further aroused by false reports that a car driven by an embassy staff member injured a Filipino child yesterday, and by the death yesterday of a Filipino shot while attempting to rob the Clark Air Base commissary.



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NOTE

Laos: There has been no new ground action near the Plaine des Jarres. The Communists apparently are concentrating their efforts on strengthening their hold over newly won positions and on resupplying front line forces. General Vang Pao is moving additional troops into position south of the Plaine in anticipation of an enemy thrust against the government's new defense line. The Meo leader's determination to defend his headquarters at Long Tieng has been reinforced by a recent statement of support for his efforts by local Meo chieftains.

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